



December 2009

Latest news from the Minister

Electrical apprentices safety pilot program a success

The Queensland Government is planning to expand a successful pilot training program that raises safety awareness among apprentice electricians.

Industrial Relations Minister Cameron Dick today met with three fourth-year apprentices who had recently completed a 12-week electrical safety pilot program run by the Electrical Safety Office.

“Safety in the workplace is of paramount importance, and this training program highlights the work of the Electrical Safety Office in ensuring that the safety message is delivered to those about to start their career in the electrical industry,” Mr Dick said.

“There have been 28 serious incidents involving electrical workers in Queensland in the last two years, including two fatalities.

“The high number of incidents highlights the importance, of raising safety awareness within the electrical industry,” he said.

Mr Dick said during the 12-week program, the apprentices had been in the field with inspectors assisting with process audits, electrical installation verification and some safety investigations.

“The apprentices have received invaluable experience working alongside electrical safety inspectors,” Mr Dick said.

“When the apprentices return to their workplaces, their experiences will help them to promote a stronger emphasis on electrical safety.

“The program, which has industry support, aims to help improve the apprentices’ knowledge and awareness of electrical safety and promote the role of the Electrical Safety Office, while offering secure work placements,” he said.

Mr Dick said a recent fatality involved an electrical tradesperson who was only nine months out of his apprenticeship.

“The fatality and other serious incidents involving licensed electrical workers prompted the Queensland Government to develop this project targeting those still completing their apprenticeships,” Mr Dick said.

“It is important that safe workplace practices are learnt at the start of a worker’s career.

“The Electrical Safety Office is planning on expanding the program next year, and will host a total of nine fourth-year apprentices for 12 weeks each,” he said.

Metal staples ban will improve insulation safety

The Bligh Government has banned the use of metal staples and other forms of conductive fasteners on ceiling insulation as part of a range of measures to improve safety for ceiling insulation installers and householders.

Attorney-General and Industrial Relations Minister Cameron Dick has issued a ministerial notice under the Electrical Safety Act 2002 to prohibit the use of metal fastenings for ceiling insulation.

The ban takes effect from today.

Mr Dick said the government was implementing several safety measures in response to growing concerns about the safe installation of foil ceiling insulation.

An installer was electrocuted and a co-worker was seriously injured while installing foil insulation on Brisbane's southside on October 14. Initial reports indicate that while foil insulation was being installed, a metal staple pierced a live electrical cable.

"This tragic incident has highlighted the electrical safety risks associated with the installation of conductive foil ceiling insulation," Mr Dick said.

"As a result of this incident, I have decided to introduce mandatory provisions that will make the industry safer.

"I have also spoken with Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett to discuss the issues that have emerged in recent times about the safety of ceiling insulation.

"The measures we are taking complement the safety initiatives that the Federal Government is introducing from today for its Home Insulation Scheme.

"No other Queenslanders should have to endure the tragedy that has befallen the young installer and his family.

"The incident is currently the subject of an investigation by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and the Electrical Safety Office, which may recommend further actions to make the industry safer.

"If that is the case, I will not hesitate to implement any recommendations that will ensure workers within this industry are safe.

"We are keeping a close watch on this issue and if any householders have any concerns about dodgy operators or the quality of the work they have received, they can contact the Office of Fair Trading (13 13 04), the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland infoline for safety matters (1300 362 320) or the Federal Government's Home Insulation Scheme hotline (1800 808 571)."

The ministerial notice means that installers will have to use nylon or plastic fasteners (which are already in use within the industry), glue or tape to fix foil insulation in ceilings.

As well as banning metal fasteners, the notice also:

- forces insulation installers to comply with the Wiring Rules with respect to the placement of any type of insulation near recessed downlights
- makes electrical safety risk assessment training mandatory for all installers
- forces installers to document their on-site electrical safety risk assessments and keep a record for five years.

"The actions of both the Queensland and Australian governments underline our commitment to ensuring the highest standards of safety for workers," Mr Dick said.

More than 18,000 homes in Queensland have had foil insulation installed since the Commonwealth Home Insulation Program started earlier this year.

82 Queenslanders absent from work each day due to injury

Industrial Relations Minister Cameron Dick today emphasised the importance of workplace safety, highlighting the distressing statistic that 82 Queenslanders are absent from work each day due to workplace injuries and illness.

Mr Dick was raising awareness about workplace injuries, illness and deaths as part of this year's Safe Work Australia Week, which starts today and continues until 31 October.

"Every year about 100 Queenslanders die and 30,000 suffer serious injuries or work-related diseases," Mr Dick said.

"That means that on average, 82 Queensland workers are absent from their workplace on any given day because of a serious work-related injury or illness.

"A serious injury or illness is one that results in a worker being absent from their workplace for five or more days.

"The financial cost of these absences has been estimated at more than \$5.2 billion a year but even worse is the incalculable cost in human suffering resulting from this death and injury toll.

"The Queensland Government wants to turn these shocking statistics around to ensure people make it home safe and sound to their loved ones at the end of each working day.

"We're working with employers and workers to build a positive zero-harm safety culture in all Queensland workplaces to reduce the number and severity of workplace incidents.

"Ensuring our businesses are as safe and productive as possible will also secure Queensland jobs and keep the economy strong," he said.

Mr Dick urged Queensland workplaces to get involved "boots and all" in this year's Safe Work Australia Week.

"Safe Work Australia Week, now in its fifth year, is a national week which focuses attention on workplace health and safety issues," he said.

"It aims to encourage all working Australians to get involved in, and concentrate on, safety in their workplace to reduce death, injury and disease.

"Safe Work Australia Week is for all Queenslanders – whether you're a small, medium or large business, an office worker or labourer, an apprentice or manager, from the country or the city, or work in an office or outdoors.

"It's the perfect opportunity for employers and workers to look carefully at their workplace health and safety practices and systems and how they can be improved."

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is hosting activities throughout the state during Safe Work Australia Week – from safety conferences, information sessions and panel discussions to field days, demonstrations, displays, breakfasts and barbecues.

"TV medico Dr Andrew Rochford and rugby league legends Mal Meninga and Shane Webcke will be among the safety ambassadors who will be helping to spread the safety message during the week," Mr Dick said.

"If you can't get along to an event in your area, then run one in your own workplace.

"It needn't be fancy, costly or time consuming to be effective and you don't have to do it on your own, consider doing it in partnership with other local businesses."

Mr Dick said this year's Safe Work Australia Week theme was Healthier and safer workplaces –

Healthier and safer workers, with workplaces encouraged to get involved “boots and all”.

“Safety often presents the most immediate risk, but the long-term health of workers is no less important. Both health and safety need to be part of an integrated risk management system in every workplace.

“Managing lifestyle issues such as obesity, heavy drinking, smoking and unsafe sun exposure can lead to safer and healthier workers and workplaces.

“Helping businesses to set up health and wellbeing programs is a priority for the Queensland Government.”

For some simple ideas on how to get involved in Safe Work Australia Week visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

Breaking news

2009 Work Safe Awards winners announced

Winners of the [2009 Work Safe Awards](#) were announced at the inaugural joint Work Safe and Return to Work Awards ceremony held in Brisbane on Tuesday 27 October 2009 during [Safe Work Australia Week](#) (21-31 October 2009).

The Queensland Work Safe Awards run by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is in its fifth year. The Work Safe Awards reward business operators and workers' achievements in ensuring safer workplaces. They recognise and reward genuine efforts to prevent workplace incidents that can result in death or injury to workers. They promote best practice and encourage businesses to develop and share innovative safety solutions, resulting in safer workplaces.

The Return to Work Awards were launched for the first time this year by Q-COMP, the state workers' compensation scheme regulator. They aim to recognise the outstanding efforts of employers, injured workers and rehabilitation and return to work coordinators in getting injured workers back to meaningful, safe work.

Entries were received from all over Queensland across five categories and the winners received \$1000 in prize money to put towards health and safety in their business.

The 2009 winners are:

Category 1 - Best workplace health and safety management system

Winner - [S&N Civil Constructions Pty Ltd](#), Townsville

For expansion of the company's quality management system to a fully integrated and certified management system.

Finalist - [AREVA T&D Australia Limited](#), Rocklea

Finalist - [Building Rectification Services](#), Ashmore

Finalist - [Canon Australia Pty Ltd](#), Cannon Hill

Finalist - [Department of Transport and Main Roads](#), Brisbane.

Category 2 - Best solution to an identified health and safety issue

Winner - [Frook Pty Ltd](#), Townsville

For a safer, faster and more cost-effective method of temporary bracing when installing trusses on a building.

Highly Commended - [University of Queensland Library](#), St Lucia

Highly Commended - [Bovis Lend Lease](#), Brisbane

Finalist - [BHB Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance \(BMA\)](#), Moranbah

Finalist - [Department of Transport and Main Roads](#), Brisbane
Finalist - [Leighton Contractors](#), Ipswich/Logan Interchange Project.

Category 3 - Best workplace health and safety practices in small business

Highly commended - [Matt Electric](#), Burleigh Heads.

For implementing "SafetyConnect," a comprehensive safety plan for improving occupational health and safety practices.

Category 4 - best individual contribution to workplace health and safety

Winner - [John Harris](#), Phoenix Drilling Services, Capella (north of Emerald)

For inventing a safer compressor radiator top up system.

Highly Commended - [Reg O'Brien](#), Boyne Smelters, Boyne Island

Highly Commended - [Paul Gibson](#), ARA group, various Queensland locations

Finalist - [Michael Wright](#), O'Donnell Griffin, Cannon Hill.

Category 5 - Best solution to an identified electrical safety issue

Winner - [Stanwell Corporation Limited](#), Brisbane

For developing a safe method of managing arc flash hazards through the provision of registers and electrical panel door labelling.

The awards rewarded the achievements of Queensland companies and individuals who were leading the way in injury prevention and rehabilitation of injured workers.

Winners of categories 1- 4 will be automatically entered into the national Safe Work Australia awards to compete against winning entries from each state and territory.

For more information on the Queensland awards and to view the finalists and winners profiles visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

For winners and finalists of Q-COMP's Return to Work Awards visit www.qcomp.com.au

National OHS Act - how will it affect you?

In the last edition of eSAFE we brought you the developments of the nationally harmonised occupational health and safety system, to be implemented in all Australian jurisdictions by 1 January 2012. The public comment period on the draft Safe Work Bill, produced by Safe Work Australia closed on 9 November 2009. A revised Safe Work Bill will be considered by Commonwealth, State and Territory Workplace Relations Ministers in December 2009. Below is an overview of some of the main features of the new Bill.

Duties:

- Persons conducting a business or undertaking owe workers and others a health and safety duty of care. The duty of care is qualified by the term 'as far as is reasonably practicable' and the onus of proving this will be on the regulator.
- The Bill places an obligation on workers to exercise 'reasonable care' to ensure that their acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons.

Penalties:

- The Bill substantially increases penalties. The most serious offences, Category 1 offences involving recklessness, will be dealt with on indictment in mainstream courts. The maximum fine for corporations is \$3 million. Individuals can be fined up to \$600,000 with a maximum term of five years imprisonment.

Consultation:

- The proposed Bill contains more detailed provisions for consultative arrangements in terms of the determination of work groups and the process for the election of health and safety representatives.
- For the purposes of consultation, work groups can elect health and safety representatives. The number and composition of work groups to be represented by representatives will be negotiated between workers and the business or undertaking.
- The proposed Bill requires health and safety issues to be resolved in accordance with an agreed procedure or the procedure outlined in the legislation. A representative of a party to an issue in dispute may enter the workplace for the purpose of resolving the issue. Unresolved OHS issues can be referred to the regulator.
- The Safe Work Bill will allow workers to cease work if they have reasonable grounds to believe that to continue to work would expose them to a serious risk from an immediate or imminent exposure to a hazard. This provision codifies existing common law rights. Workers must notify management and can be redeployed to other suitable duties.
- After consulting the person conducting the business or undertaking, health and safety representatives (HSRs) also have a right to direct workers to cease work if there is immediate or imminent hazard. However, the HSR can direct a cease work without consultation under certain circumstances.

More information about OHS harmonisation can be found on the [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website](#).

FAQs for musculoskeletal disorders

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has released a new information sheet which provides answers to the questions frequently asked of our inspectors and advisors about musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs). On average 62 per cent of serious, non-fatal workers' compensation claims are for MSDs. These injuries are caused by manual tasks, slips and trips, and hitting and being hit by objects. Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is working with obligation holders to increase their capacity to control these risks.

Industry insights

Between a rock and a hard place

Taking a few risks when working on your property may seem like the quick answer, but it could end up as a disaster. Ultimately everyone deserves to go home after a day's work, a little dirty, but safe to their family and friends.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland has developed a new film about the story of Garry Nichols' tractor roll-over incident that happened 17 years ago. The incident is still very real, just as vivid in Garry's mind now as it was back then.

Garry was one of the lucky ones. He lost a leg, he lost his farm, but he hasn't lost his fighting spirit and he admits that those few seconds changed the rest of his life forever.

The film was launched by former Broncos star, Shane Webcke, in Mackay during [Safe Work Australia Week](#) and is now available for download from the [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website](#).

Being safe at work is a key message from Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. Think beyond what an incident might do to you. Think about the impact it will have on your family, your relationship, your finances, your friends and neighbours, even the police and inspectors who have to follow through with an investigation.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Construction *WorkHealth* program rewarded at the 2009 Premier Awards

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland won a highly commended award at this year's Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Service Delivery.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland's Construction *WorkHealth* Initiative Pilot was one of three finalists in the 'Healthy' category at this year's awards and rated a special mention in the Premier Anna Bligh's opening address to the awards.

WorkHealth is a health and wellbeing program which, as part of a pilot, involved conducting free health and skin assessments on more than 1000 construction workers affected by issues such as obesity, smoking, excessive exposure to the sun and consumption of alcohol.

The program was initiated by the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF), co-ordinated by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) and supported by Building Employee Redundancy Trust (BERT), WorkCover Queensland, Queensland Health, Civil Contractors Federation (CCF), Queensland Master Builder's Association (QMBA), Australian Workers' Union (AWU) and Construction Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU).

The contributions of Royce Kupsch (BLF), Ian Brusasco WorkCover Queensland, John Crittall (QMBA), Andrew Ramsey (CFMEU), Barry Martin (AWU), Robert Row (CCF), Bill Wallace (BERT) and Paul Goldsbrough and Trinh Le (WHSQ) ensured the success of the program.

The aims of the *WorkHealth* pilot were to:

- obtain insights into the health and well-being of workers in the construction industry
- raise awareness of general health issues and increase knowledge of individual health status
- encourage workers to consult the medical profession on health matters
- motivate workers to improve their general health and fitness
- reduce absenteeism and premature exit of construction workers from the industry due to poor health, and
- help identify possible new health promotion strategies for workers in the construction industry.

The findings have spurred cultural change within the industry, launching a number of initiatives to address these concerns. The Queensland Government has established a taskforce led by the Office of Fair and Safe Work Queensland to provide recommendations on improving the health of outdoor workers to achieve one of the ***Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland*** targets to cut obesity, smoking, heavy drinking and unsafe sun exposure by one third by 2020.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Executive Director, Dr Simon Blackwood said that all stakeholders involved in the *WorkHealth* program should be very proud of their achievements.

'Construction unions have held concern for the general health of workers in the industry, and until now have been unsuccessful gaining stakeholder support to develop a health and wellbeing program,' he said.

'Initiatives such as *WorkHealth* pave the way for strategies and programs to ensure the health and safety of all Queensland outdoor workers,' Dr Blackwood said.

Further information on the 2009 Premier's Awards for Excellence in Public Service Delivery is available on the [Premier's website](#).

Health and safety hotspots

Safe forklift operation

Published: 30 October 2009

Last Updated: 26 October 2009

Purpose

A worker was fatally injured in a recent forklift incident in Queensland. The purpose of this safety alert is to remind employers and forklift operators of the need to operate forklifts in a safe manner.



Photo 1: Operate forklifts in a safe manner.

Employers

- Only allow workers to operate a forklift if they hold a high risk work licence to do so. Issue the forklift key to an authorised person only.
- Ensure forklift operators are adequately supervised - particularly in the case of trainee forklift operators.
- Ensure training is provided for operators on the specific make and model of forklift. This training can be in the form of a checklist with a skilled operator carrying out the training. The training should include operating the forklift and familiarisation of the work area.
- Ensure forklifts are maintained and serviced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and all safety features provided by the manufacturer are kept on the unit.
- Ensure safety inspections are carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Provide adequate lighting for safe forklift operation.
- Ensure operators and other workers are aware of forklift operating areas. Workplaces should clearly delineate and use exclusion zones such as painted walkways.
- Paint obstacles with high visibility paint.

Forklift operators

- Only drive a forklift when you hold a high risk work licence or are otherwise authorised to perform the high risk work.
- Make sure you read and understand the operating instructions before you operate the forklift.
- Comply with the operating instructions.
- Use the forklift truck only for the purpose for which it was designed.
- Carry out a daily safety inspection of the forklift before you operate the forklift.
- Remain seated while the forklift is moving and do not lean outside of the unit.
- Operate the forklift truck with the load placed fully against the truck carriage or back rest. The mast should be tilted sufficiently backward to safeguard the load.
- Slow down when travelling close to obstacles, other vehicles, or pedestrians.
- When driving, give way to pedestrians. Maintain a clear view ahead and behind (using a correctly adjusted rear view mirror) and give clear indication of your intentions. Maintain a safe distance from other vehicles.
- Drive carefully on wet or slippery surfaces.
- Reduce speed when making a turn.
- Drive in reverse if vision is obscured by a bulky load.
- Slow down on sloping or uneven ground.
- Remove the ignition/starter switch key when you leave the forklift truck. Ensure the controls are in neutral, the power is shut off, the park brakes are applied and the forks fully lowered.
- Wear high visibility clothing.
- Do not carry passengers.

Seatbelts

Seatbelts are provided on most forklifts and should be worn. Seatbelts help to:

1. Stop the operator being thrown out of the seat if the forklift is involved in a collision.
2. Keep the operator's body within the confines of the overhead guard.
3. Prevent the operator being thrown out of the forklift and crushed if the forklift becomes unstable.

Where a forklift is not fitted with a seatbelt the forklift owner should consider retro fitting a seatbelt. The seatbelt should be fitted in accordance with the forklift manufacturer's instructions.

Training and licence requirements

NOHSC 7019 (1992) - Operation of Load shifting and Other Specified Equipment provides guidelines which cover the minimum competencies required for safe use and operation of the specified industrial equipment.

All users, trainees and operators of industrial equipment covered by this national standard are required to:

- hold a relevant certificate of competency unless they are undergoing supervised and/or accredited training; and
- have the necessary health and fitness required to safely operate the relevant type of industrial equipment.
- In summary:
- A training plan must be established for the trainee.
- Formal training, covering all the elements of the unit of competency, including both theory and practical, must be provided by an approved person.
- The trainee's informal learning is logged in the log book.
- The trainee undertakes the theory assessment if not completed prior to the log book.
- The trainee undertakes the practical assessment.
- If competent, the trainee makes application for a licence.

More information

Further information on forklift safety is available at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or by calling the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915.

In particular:

- [Plant Code of Practice 2005](#)
- [Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008](#) (s. 18, 25, 31-33)
- [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#)
- *NOHSC 7019 (1992) - Operation of Load shifting and Other Specified Equipment.*

Electrical risks to insulation installers

Published: 22 October 2009

Last Updated: 22 October 2009

Purpose

The purpose of this safety alert is to:

- Inform people about the danger of installing insulation near electrical equipment in ceilings.
- Provide guidance on how to control and identify a range of hazards found in ceilings.

Background

A fatality and a serious injury to another person in Brisbane in mid October is a tragic reminder of the serious risks associated with installing ceiling insulation. To ensure your safety and that of others, it is vital that you identify and control a range of hazards found in ceilings.

These hazards can relate to electrical wiring or fittings that can cause electric shock or fire, working at heights, hazardous fibres or dusts, and vermin or insects.

Insulation installers should follow the advice in the e-Alert issued by the Queensland Electrical Safety Office on 15 October 2009 and pass the information on to others that may be exposed to these risks. Further guidance for insulation installers will be published on the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website in the near future, www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Electrical Safety Office e-Alert

issued 15 October.

Electrical fatality of insulation installer

The Electrical Safety Office and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland are investigating the fatality of an insulation installer on 14 October 2009.

A second person assisting with the work received an electric shock and burns.

While an investigation is underway, it appears that a staple, used to fix foil insulation in the roof space of a home, may have pierced an electric cable which energised the foil.

Insulation installers are warned of the dangers associated with installing conductive foil type insulation near electrical equipment including cables, light fittings and ceiling fans etc.

Installed incorrectly this could cause the insulation to become energised, not only posing an electrical risk to the installer but also to others.

A safe system of work should be used to manage such risks. This system must include measures to avoid damaging electrical equipment/cables when installing conductive material like aluminium insulation products.

The Electrical Safety Act requires an employer or self employed person to conduct their business in a way that is electrically safe. This is also relevant to non-electrical work such as installing insulation material.

While such events may not always result in death, they can still have a serious impact on your health, including burns, damage to the nervous system, brain, sensory/motor organs, heart and lungs. A shock can also throw you off balance resulting in fall injuries. The prospect of such injuries occurring in a roof space can make rescue difficult resulting in a delay in treatment.

The Electrical Safety Office has also warned installers not to underestimate other [dangers involved](#), such as the increased fire risk associated with incorrectly installing insulation around lighting fixtures.

Anyone entering a roof space should conduct a risk assessment to determine possible hazards prior to starting work.

Information on risk assessments is available at www.deir.qld.gov.au/workplace/law/codes/riskman/index.htm

For further information on electrical safety information visit www.fairandsafework.qld.gov.au/electricalsafety or telephone 1300 650 662.

Barry Dieckmann
Acting Executive Director
Electrical Safety Office

Further information

For more workplace health and safety information, visit www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

Safety in the sun

Did you know that Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world? Spending time in the 'great outdoors' is the Australian way of life. As a result, two out of three Queenslanders will develop some type of skin cancer in their life time.

With the summer months upon us we need to ensure that we are sun-smart and protect ourselves against harmful UV exposure both at work and at play.

People who spend a lot of time in the sun risk developing skin cancer, other skin disorders, eye conditions such as cataract and macular degeneration, heat stress and heat-related illness.

Am I at risk?

Workers most at risk of suffering skin cancer and other sun or heat-related illness include:

- building and construction workers
- carpark attendants
- gardeners and ground maintenance staff
- teachers supervising sporting activities
- fishing industry workers
- lifeguards and pool attendants
- outdoor council workers
- police officers

- power line workers
- road workers
- rural workers
- truck and delivery van drivers.

Within these industries those most at risk include:

- people with fair skin
- workers exposed to direct sunlight between 10am and 2pm
- workers exposed to water, construction materials, polished aluminium and grass (common reflectors)
- workers carrying out strenuous tasks or work that is sustained for long periods
- workers exposed to additional heat from machinery
- workers in northern parts of Queensland (this region being closer to the equator has clear sky UV radiation levels that are about one-third higher in Townsville than in Brisbane).

What are my legal responsibilities?

Under the [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#), if an employee works outside for most or some of the working day, their employer is legally obliged to provide protection from the sun and heat. An employer must protect workers from UV radiation exposure that:

- may cause adverse health effects, or
- exceeds a UV index of three. In Queensland the average UV index is four or more, therefore protective measures are required all year round.

Workers also have a legal obligation to comply with instructions regarding sun safety precautions, to use personal protective equipment and to ensure that they do not put themselves or another person at risk.

How can I protect myself and my employees?

To avoid the sun and prevent skin cancer and sun related illness you should:

- Wear personal protection (sunscreen, sunglasses and suitable clothing), take precautions and set limits during summer's highest risk time - between 10am and 2pm.
- Reorganise work schedules so that outdoor tasks are done early in the morning or late in the day.
- Rotate or job-share tasks that involve direct sun exposure.
- Implement easy sun smart policies (such as a directive that workers drive with their vehicle windows up between 10am and 2pm).
- Plan the work around the movement of the sun. For instance, do outdoor work on the western and northern side of a building in the morning, and work on the eastern and southern sides in the afternoon.
- Where possible, do not work in an environment heated by several sources (such as burning off under a mid-summer sun).
- Use trees, buildings and temporary shelters (such as awnings or tarps) to shade work and rest areas.
- Insulate plant and equipment to reduce radiant heat emissions.
- Where possible, fit a shade to equipment and machinery (such as tractors, small earthmovers, etc). Do not remove shielding that is provided on plant or equipment.
- Provide laminated windscreens and tinted side windows to trucks or vehicles
- Where possible, mechanise physically demanding tasks.
- Take rest or meal breaks in shady areas.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Gradually adjust your workload when starting or returning to work in hot conditions.
- In extreme conditions, wear specialised liquid or air cooled clothing.
- Screen workers for heat tolerance.
- Follow a doctor's advice before working in hot conditions if you are on medications such as sedatives, tranquillisers, antidepressants, amphetamines, antispasmodics, diuretics or medication affecting blood pressure.
- Have a plan in place for treating heat affected workers.

Resources

- [Are you protected from the sun?](#) brochure
- [Heat related illness: Signs, treatment and prevention](#) fact sheet
- [Sun Safety in Queensland](#) fact sheet
- [Sun Safety and Sunscreen](#) fact sheet
- [Sun Safety and Clothing](#) fact sheet

For further information visit the [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website](#).

Ho, Ho, OHS responsibility at workplace Christmas celebrations

It's that time of year again, the festive season is here and Christmas parties and festivities are in full swing. Corporate Christmas functions build team morale and provide staff the opportunity to reflect on their hard work and achievements for the year in a relaxed and fun atmosphere. On the other hand, corporate Christmas parties have the potential to create many problems such as alcohol related injuries and misconduct cases, and employers need to be aware of their responsibilities when serving alcohol to staff.

According to workplace health and safety legislation, employers have the obligation to ensure the safety and welfare of their staff while at work. This obligation extends to corporate Christmas celebrations regardless of whether the function is held on work premises. Just as bars and restaurants are unable to serve intoxicated patrons, employers should not allow alcohol to intoxicated or underage staff.

Some tips for employers to ensure a safe and successful Christmas season include:

- remind staff about workplace policies in particular bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination
- serve alcohol responsibly
- provide food and non-alcoholic drinks
- ensure underage staff are not served alcohol
- choose a safe venue with access to public transport, provide cab vouchers and encourage nominated 'non-drinking' drivers
- ensure wait staff are briefed on limiting or denying alcohol to intoxicated staff
- make it clear to staff that the employer's responsibility ceases at the end of the function and if staff choose to continue the evening, that they are responsible for their own safety
- managers should set the example by drinking responsibly.

While the festive season is short lived, it is a timely reminder to ensure the health and safety of staff at all workplace functions and celebrations throughout the year. It is also a reminder for employers to ensure the development and implementation of a practical alcohol and drug workplace policy that sets clear regulations and guidelines.

Alcohol and drug use in the workplace can result in lost productivity, lateness, absenteeism and poor work performance. It can also cause decreased alertness, impaired judgement and poor physical coordination - all of which can contribute to workplace injuries.

Develop an alcohol and drug workplace policy

The alcohol and drug policy that a company or industry group adopts will need to take into account the particular needs and the practical situation of the company or industry. However there are a number of minimum requirements for such a policy, it must:

- contain a clear statement of the behaviour that is expected of workers
- apply equally to all workers, including managers and supervisors at the workplace
- be part of the comprehensive health and safety program
- result from adequate consultation with workers before it is adopted
- be made known to all workers
- address issues in the work environment that increase the use of alcohol or drugs

- to the greatest degree possible, be non-punitive
- provide for appropriate treatment and rehabilitation for workers with problems
- be evaluated after implementation and amended, if necessary, in line with the outcome of the evaluation.

Implementation

The successful implementation of an alcohol and drug workplace policy has four key components:

1. education and information
2. organisational support
3. addressing issues in the work environment, and
4. prevention and rehabilitation support.

For further information on alcohol and drugs in the workplace please visit:

- [Queensland Health's Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs \(ATOD\) website](#)
- [Alcohol and Drug Foundation Queensland](#)
- [Australian Council of Alcohol and Other Drug Associations.](#)

Legal lessons

Queensland Rail fined \$650,000 over deaths of workers

Queensland Rail Ltd (QR) was fined \$650,000 in the Mackay Industrial Magistrates Court today over the deaths of two track workers in 2007.

The fine is the highest ever handed out to a corporation for a prosecution under Queensland's *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2005*.

QR pleaded guilty to breaching section 24 of the Act for failing to meet its workplace health and safety obligations.

Two QR workers were struck and killed by a reversing on-track vehicle (OTV) while working on the Goonyella railway line at Mindi, 130 kilometres south west of Mackay in Central Queensland on 7 December 2007.

The court heard that the workers sustained fatal crush injuries after being run over by the 96 tonne OTV and died at the scene.

The Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation found that QR's safety management systems were inadequate for managing the separation of workers and plant, particularly when both were within the same section of track between signals.

It also found that QR knew the systems were inadequate and not working because it had been highlighted to management in a series of audits.

In addition to the fine, QR was ordered to pay legal fees of \$80,000, investigation costs of \$50,000 and court costs of \$65,400. A conviction was recorded.

The prosecution was brought by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, a part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

*Note: The maximum fine available for the breach was \$750,000. The previous highest fine for a corporation involving multiple deaths was \$125,000 in 2002.

Toowoomba construction company fined \$38,000 for safety breach

A Toowoomba construction company has been fined \$38,000 after a worker was injured in a fall on a construction site in April 2007.

Brown Engineering & Construction Pty Ltd pleaded guilty in the Toowoomba Industrial Magistrates Court on 12 June 2009 to breaching section 24 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, having failed to ensure workplace safety.

The Court heard a worker for a sub-contractor on the construction site where the company was principal contractor had placed a ladder against a steel beam on the building to access the roof frame/purlins to take measurements. His left leg was broken when the beam fell, causing him to fall 5.5 metres to the ground.

The Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation revealed the company was responsible for leaving the steel beam unsecured at the end of work the previous day.

As a result of the incident the company now uses signage and barricading around work areas, all bolts which have been tightened are marked, and builders have to obtain information from the company before other workers are allowed access.

Industrial Magistrate Mr Michael Quinn, in addition to the fine, ordered the company to pay investigation, professional and court costs totalling \$2560. No conviction was recorded.

The prosecution was brought by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, a part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Yatala pet food company fined \$40,000 over workplace safety breach

A Yatala pet food manufacturing company has been fined \$40,000 after a worker was injured at Beenleigh in November 2007.

V.I.P. Petfoods (Aust.) Pty Ltd pleaded guilty in the Beenleigh Industrial Magistrates Court on 1 May 2009 to breaching section 24 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, having failed to ensure workplace safety.

The court heard two workers, one a supervisor, were cleaning spray nozzles on a chiller machine. They removed guarding to access the spray system.

One of the workers received a broken arm when their clothing became entangled in an unguarded drive shaft adjacent to the chiller.

The Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation found the hazard of working on moving plant while not isolated was identified by the company, and it had in place a 'Machine Isolation Lock out Procedure'; this procedure was not followed. The hazard presented by the unguarded drive shaft was not identified or controlled by the company.

A schedule of notices issued by inspectors over six years was tendered to the court, showing the company had a history of machinery and plant issues.

Industrial Magistrate Mr Peter Webber, in addition to the fine, ordered the company to pay investigation, professional and court costs totalling \$2769.40. No conviction was recorded.

The prosecution was brought by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, a part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Coomera boat manufacturer fined \$45,000 for safety breach

A Coomera boat manufacturer has been fined \$45,000 after a worker was injured in a fall in April 2009.

Riviera Marine (Int.) Pty Ltd was found guilty in the Southport Industrial Magistrates Court on 10 July 2009 of breaching section 24 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, having failed to ensure workplace safety.

The court heard the worker fell approximately 2 metres and broke his left leg while attempting to access the rear of a boat when the portable stairs he was using tipped forward.

The Workplace Health and Safety Queensland investigation revealed the stairs had the capacity to be secured to the mezzanine walkway at each side, but were not.

Industrial Magistrate Mr Gary Finger, in addition to the fine, ordered the company to pay investigation and court costs totalling \$1614.70.

Mr Finger took into consideration the company had been prosecuted on two previous occasions for workplace health and safety breaches in ordering that a conviction be recorded.

The prosecution was brought by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, a part of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Construction company pleads guilty to falsifying training records

John Sylvester Robert Cotterill

Summary

Incident description:

On 6-8 August 2007, a trainee's supervisor signed an entry in a trainee's training record without being satisfied that the entry was correct.

The court acknowledged the defendant was a stores and warehouse manager for the Southern Regional Water Pipeline Alliance at the date of the offence 6-8 August 2007 and found the defendant held obligations under s.25 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997* (the Regulation), being a supervisor of a trainee.

Investigation findings presented to the court alleged a complaint had been made that improper training and assessment were being conducted for the pipeline alliance workers seeking prescribed occupation licences issued under the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997*. One allegation made was that certain workers were directed to falsify entries in training records for operation of a vehicle loading crane and have the defendant sign those entries in the capacity of a supervisor .

Court result:

The investigation findings presented to the court revealed:

- time and wages records indicated the defendant signed training record entries for trainees prior to commencing work with the southern regional water pipeline alliance and on days when he had not worked, and

- an interview was conducted with the defendant, in which he made admissions that he failed to supervise the training of two workers and entries he signed in their training records were false.

The defendant pleaded guilty in the Brisbane Industrial Magistrates Court on 1 October 2009 to breaching s.24(1) of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*, having failed to meet his workplace health and safety obligations and was sentenced with no conviction recorded.

Industrial Magistrate Ms Christine Roney ordered the defendant pay a penalty of \$750.

In reaching a decision the court acknowledged the defendant failed to consider the gravity of his actions which comprised a serious breach of the Regulation.

In deciding the penalty Ms Roney took into account the defendant had not been prosecuted previously for any other workplace health and safety breaches, co-operated with the investigation and entered an early plea of guilty.

Considerations for prevention:

(Commentary under this heading may be additional to material before the court.)

When working in any industries where there is exposure to risks from improper training and assessment of occupational licenses, obligation holders should apply a risk management approach to ensure the selection of suitable control measures.

Risk management involves evaluating the consequences and likelihood of harm that may result from the hazard, deciding upon and implementing control measures to prevent or minimise the level of the risk from the hazard and monitoring the effectiveness of the control measures to ensure they remain working correctly.

When deciding upon and implementing appropriate control measures associated with the training and assessment of workers, obligation holders should ensure that such tasks are undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced workers with appropriate control measure implemented to ensure records are checked on a regular basis.

Visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website for more information on:

- [training staff](#) and using [control measures](#) to manage risks associated with workplace hazards
- [licensing and registration information](#)
- [crane and hoist licensing requirements](#)
- *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 2008*
- [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#)
- What [penalties](#) apply under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

Compliance and enforcement

Are you a medium size business? Expect a visit from a workplace health and safety inspector soon

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is introducing a new initiative that involves medium size businesses (MSBs) across Queensland in 2010 and 2011.

The initiative aims to help MSBs:

- reduce the number of injuries and fatalities occurring in their business
- increase awareness and knowledge of workplace health and safety risks and obligations, and
- improve their capability to effectively manage workplace health and safety risks in consultation with workers.

What is this initiative?

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will be visiting every medium sized business to check their compliance with the [Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995](#).

Before this happens Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is offering businesses a free voluntary advisory session with one of our experts to identify workplace health and safety issues and develop better safety practices.

The consultations offered to each business will vary depending on the level of risk associated to their business. Risk level is determined by their number of claims and the industry they operate in.

Who is a medium size business?

For this initiative you are considered a medium sized business if your declared wages to WorkCover Queensland during the 2008-2009 financial year was between \$1 million and \$10 million.

Why are we conducting this initiative?

The *Queensland Workplace Health and Safety Strategy 2004-12*, sets targets for a reduction in fatalities and injuries, including:

- 40 per cent decrease of work-related injuries, and
- 20 per cent decrease in work-related fatalities.

In Queensland there are approximately 8500 MSBs. These businesses account for over 30 per cent of all workers' compensation claims, but represent only four per cent of all business paying premiums to WorkCover Queensland.

If the reduction targets are to be achieved then Workplace Health and Safety Queensland must work with medium sized businesses to create healthier and safer workplaces.

Further information

Businesses involved in the medium sized business initiative will be contacted in early 2010. More information will become available at www.worksafe.qld.gov.au early next year.

National compliance campaign - New and young workers in hospitality

In November 2007 the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA) implemented a national compliance campaign targeting new and young workers in the hospitality industry.

The primary purpose of the campaign was identified as reducing the risk of injury and illness to new and young workers by raising the awareness of:

- duty holders control risks for new and young workers, and
- the workplace health and safety rights and responsibilities of new and young workers.

Nationally endorsed guidance material for new and young workers and their employers was developed as part of the project, as well as a workplace visit audit tool for inspectors.

Young workers for this campaign were identified as workers under the age of 24 working in the hospitality industry and included labour hire employees, apprentices and trainees and students who were part of a work experience or structured workplace learning program. New workers were identified as workers of any age within the hospitality industry who were new to the role, new to the workplace and/or new to the task.

How the audit was conducted

Inspectors visited 52 cafes and restaurants in Queensland. Using the nationally produced audit tool inspectors assessed the following compliance criteria:

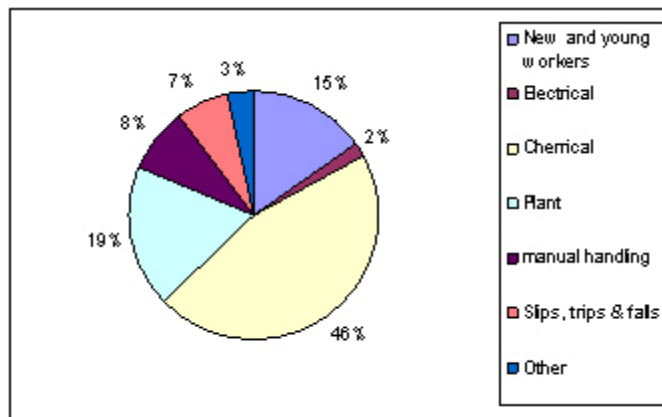
- induction training, consultation and communication, on the job training and supervision
- general hazards including:
 - electrical hazards
 - chemical hazards
 - plant hazards
 - manual handling hazards
 - slip, trip and fall hazards, and
 - situations that could potentially result in injuries from a lack of, or inadequate, emergency procedures.

Findings*

As a result of the audits conducted in Queensland, inspectors issued a total of 59 notices relating to:

New and young workers	
Prohibition notices	0
Improvement notices	9
General hazards	
Prohibition notices	5
Improvement notices	45

The following chart represents the percentage of notices issued for the topics (hazards) outlined in the audit tool.



Summary

The Queensland data produced from the campaigns findings is generally consistent with data of other jurisdictions, which suggests the level of occupational health and safety compliance for new and young workers in the hospitality industry is satisfactory.

Opportunities for improvement for new and young workers were identified as:

- The provision of induction training (specific occupational health and safety information, including policies and procedures)
- on the job training, and
- better use of personal protective equipment.

General improvement opportunities in the cafes and restaurant sector were identified as better management of chemical and plant hazards and gas cylinder security.

Visit www.hwsa.org.au/activities/activities-campaign_final_reports.aspx to access copies of the final project report and national guidance material - 'Safety Tips for New and Young Workers and their Employers'.

More information

For further information visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website www.worksafe.qld.gov.au or call the WHS Infoline on 1300 369 915 .

* The findings only represent what was found during workplace visits and are relevant to industries visited.

Campaign corner

Boots and all - Successful Safe Work Australia Week 2009

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland coordinated and led a very successful [Safe Work Australia Week](#) (SWAW) campaign from 25 - 31 October 2009.

Over 50 Workplace Health and Safety Queensland led events were held state-wide with over 2000 Queenslanders attending to learn about how they can be part of a *Healthier and safer workplace* and be a *Healthier and safer worker* linking to the Queensland Government's *Toward Q2* strategy.

The major events saw 23 safety partners supporting SWAW and 10 ambassadors including the Minister for Industrial Relations the Honourable Cameron Dick MP, Dr Andrew Rochford from Channel 9's *What's Good for You*, former Australian rugby league great and Brisbane Broncos enforcer Shane Webcke, and former Australian rugby league test captain Mal Meninga.

On 25 October 2009 the *Sunday Mail* featured an article on Safe Work Australia Week including a photo of 82 staff from the department wearing high visibility vests. The number 82 is significant as it represents the number of Queensland workers who are seriously injured every day requiring five days or more off work.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland also used the week to launch a new engagement and awareness tool for the rural industry, [Between a rock and a hard place - the Garry Nichols story DVD](#)

Dr Simon Blackwood, Executive Director, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland said that participation from individuals and organisations in the week continues to increase each year, reflecting the overwhelming support and commitment for workplace health and safety in the community.

'It demonstrates that workers, managers and supervisors want to play their part in reducing work-related diseases, injuries and fatalities,' Dr Blackwood said.

As in previous years, Queensland companies were also given the opportunity to get involved in the week and host an event at their own workplace; be it a breakfast, morning tea, staff luncheon, workshop or even just getting staff physically moving on a lunchtime walk or bike ride.

Check out the [calendar of events](#) to see the details of all events held during the week.

Thank you to everyone who participated in and partnered with Workplace Health and Safety Queensland for the week. 2010 is shaping up to be a very big year.

For more information on Safe Work Australia Week visit the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website www.worksafe.qld.gov.au.



Photo: 82 workers representing the number of Queenslanders seriously injured every day of the year at work. Photo includes SWAW safety ambassadors and departmental staff.

Make a workplace complaint online

A new feature coming soon to the Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website means users will be able to make an online complaint about a business or organisation not adhering to good workplace health and safety practices.

The ability to immediately provide information on the website will assist in reducing response times to investigate these issues, as well as making it easier and simpler for users to quickly provide information rather than contacting the department by phone, fax or other means.

The earlier that information can be received about workplace health and safety issues and inappropriate practices means Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will be in a better position to help save lives and prevent major injuries and fatalities from occurring.

The online complaint form can be used to report:

- A risk of injury or illness to persons at a workplace or a relevant workplace area, caused by a work activity, plant, substance or workplace harassment.
- An electrical risk to persons or property.
- A risk of harm to persons, property or the environment caused by storage or handling of hazardous materials.

This is good news for industry, companies and businesses that may not be aware of a dangerous practice occurring within their businesses. Through the complaint form these practices can be identified and changed now rather than seeing the consequences of an injury later. However, before lodging a complaint, workers are encouraged to discuss the matter with their employer to try and rectify the situation before getting the regulator involved. Communication and commitment at all levels is the key to ensure workplace health and safety.

The [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland website](#) continues to regularly publish important information about workplace health and safety issues.

New information published recently includes:

- Zero Harm at Work Leadership Forum program including new members

- *Between a rock and a hard place*, a short film about a rural incident, can be viewed on the site or can be downloaded (shortly to be joined by other industry films)
- A calendar detailing all state-wide Workplace Health and Safety Queensland events, and a place where you can promote your own Workplace Health and Safety Queensland related event.

For further information call the Workplace Health and Safety Infoline on 1300 369 915.

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